

REMARKS

By virtue of the above amendment, claims 1, 2, and 5 have been amended. Accordingly, claims 1-8 are pending and under consideration, claim 1 being an independent claim. Applicants thank the Examiner for indicating that claims 3-6 contain allowable subject matter.

Applicants also wish to thank Examiner Mai for his outstanding courtesy and cooperation exhibited during the personal interview conducted on February 5, 2004.

During the above-noted interview, Applicant's representative discussed the features of the present invention and the advantages thereof with respect to the prior art. Moreover, Applicant's representative discussed the references cited by the Examiner and pointed out the shortcomings thereof with respect to the features of the present invention.

In particular, the differences between the prior art references of SATO et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,512,638), TAKAHASHI (Japanese Patent No. 2000-275518), and the present invention were discussed. In this regard it was explained how the present invention operates with specific reference to details of the first linear guide mechanism (rod 75 and bore 53b as discussed on page 75 of the specification) and second linear guide mechanism (slot 53f and guide projection 54d as discussed on page 76 of the specification). With respect to the recitation of these features in the claims, it was also noted that neither SATO et al. nor TAKAHASHI discloses either of the features of preventing rotation and limiting rotation as claimed, respectively. The above is a brief explanation of a complex embodiment in order to permit better understanding of the invention, and does not define the scope of the invention, which is set forth in the claim language.

During the interview the Examiner indicated the he did not prefer the claim language of claim 1 and thus the Examiner and Applicant's representative agreed to

change “preventing” to --that prevents-- in claim 1, line 10, and “while limiting” in line 14 to --and that limits--. The Examiner indicated that, based on the comments of Applicants’ representative and the amendments, that the claims would overcome SATO. The Examiner also indicated that upon review of a TAKAHASHI et al. translation that the Examiner will obtain, the claims will most likely also be overcome. The Examiner indicated that the available TAKAHASHI et al. English language abstract and drawings did not disclose the claimed features.

Accordingly, by the present response, Applicants have amended each of the independent claims in the manner suggested by the Examiner and made other language changes.

Furthermore, none of the applied references teaches or suggests the combined limitations of claim 1, including, but not limited, to a structure wherein a guide clearance of a first linear guide mechanism (having the detailed structure and relationship to other elements as recited) is larger than a guide clearance of a second linear guide mechanism (having the detailed structure and relationship to other elements as recited).

Accordingly, for at least the above reasons, Applicants respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider and withdraw the rejections of claim 1 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(a).

Applicants further submit that claims 2, 7, and 8, which depend either directly or indirectly from claim 1, are allowable over the references of record for the above reasons, and at least for the reason that each depends from an allowable base claim and because each recites additional features that further define Applicants' invention. These claims also define features not found in the art of record.

Pursuant to MPEP §714.13, Applicants contend that entry of the present amendment is appropriate because the proposed amended claims avoid the rejections set forth in the last Office Action, resulting in the application being placed in condition for

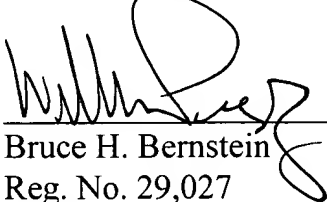
allowance, or, alternatively, the revised claims place the application in better condition for purposes of appeal. Furthermore, the revised claims do not present any new issues that would require any further consideration and/or search by the Examiner, and the amendment does not present any additional claims without canceling a like number of pending claims. Accordingly, entry of the present amendment is respectfully requested.

In view of the fact that none of the art of record, whether considered alone or in combination, discloses or suggests the present invention as now defined by the pending claims, and in further view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the Examiner's action and allowance of all the pending claims in the present application are respectfully requested and are believed to be appropriate.

The amendments to the claims which have been made in this reply should not be considered to be narrowing, but only to clarify existing recitations, and no estoppel should be deemed to attach thereto. No equivalents are considered to have been disclaimed.

If there should be any questions concerning this application, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,
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